Participant Selection Checklist

When is this checklist useful?	The Checklist
When you are trying to determine the best people to include as team members.	☑ Does this person have relevant experience? ☑ Does this person have relevant content expertise? ☑ Does this person have sanction from their manager/boss/home department to participate? ☑ Is this person skilled at constructive teamwork, namely: • communicating effectively • listening • learning and analysis • coming to agreement • decision-making ☑ Does this person have a personal stake in a good outcome? ☑ Does this person represent a constituency whose input is essential for a good outcome?

Creating Process Agendas

When is a process agenda helpful?

When you want to plan for effective use of meeting time.

When you want to give forethought to the materials you'll need for the activities of a meeting.

When you want to test whether you'll be able to accomplish all your planned objectives within the timeframe of a meeting.

Sample Process Agenda

These two columns become your meeting agenda

Making step by step activity notes will help you stay on task and anticipate more accurate timeframes

This column functions as a checklist of supplies you'll need for the meeting

Time	Focus	Activity	Materials
9:00	Welcome and Overview of day	Chair introduce facilitator Handout agendas Review slides Any questions?	• agendas • ppt slides • projector
9:20	Reverse Brainstorming on Process Improvement	Give instructions Time alone first Small groups, share ideas then write each on cards share with whole group and post on wall	• reverse brainstorming instructions • self-stick cards • markers
10:00	Cluster topics	volunteers to cluster ideas whole group confirm clusters	
10:20	break		
10:30	Prioritizing ideas	discussion of top priority ideas individual vote with stickers for best ideas	• sticky dots

Facilitator's "Before and After" Checklist

Before

- [ ] prepare process agenda
- [ ] confirm attendance
- [ ] confirm room
- [ ] create any handouts
- [ ] gather any needed supplies
- [ ] send reminder email with agenda attached

After

- [ ] send out meeting notes with highlighted reminders of any agreements made
- [ ] follow up on any "to do's" promised during the meeting

Sample Ground Rules

When are ground rules helpful?

Offering ground rules at the first meeting of any new team sets a tone of open disclosure, conveys that the work of the team is worth doing well, and creates a shared understanding of the behaviors that will be expected.

If these expectations are on the table from day one, any divergence from the basic agreements can be addressed with a gentle "remember the ground rule we set about...?" rather than as personal issues.

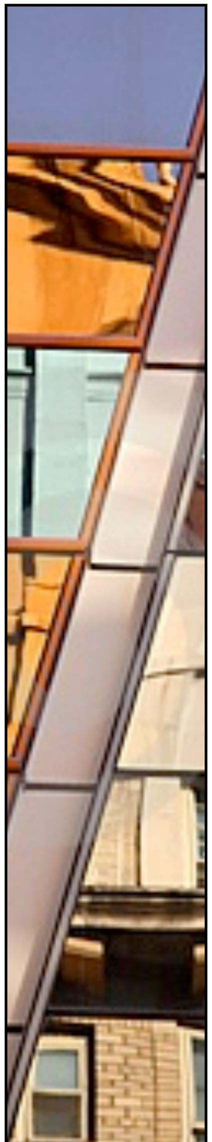
Some Sample Ground Rules

The best ground rules for your group may include some or all of these ideas. You may also choose to enlist team members in adding to the list of ground rules based on their experiences of good practice in previous teams.

- We will start and end on time.
- Please turn off cell phones during meetings.
- Let the facilitator know if you will not be able to attend a meeting.
- All ideas are valued.
- We will listen respectfully to each other.
- Check out your assumptions.
- We will seek common ground and forward movement.
- Differences and problems are acknowledged and worked to the extent possible.
- No side conversations.
- Assume good intentions
- Don't revisit decisions that have already been made.
- We will bring a problem-solving ethic, asking "what will it take to make this work?" not "here's why this won't work."
- We will be data-driven in our approach, asking "what information do we need to make a good judgement?

Dialogue Guidelines

"Like a pane of glass framing and subtly distorting our vision, mental models determine what we see." - Peter Senge



When is this tool helpful?

Dialogue is helpful when group members want to think together and learn from each other.

Dialogue is different from advocacy.

When you advocate for a position, your goal is to advance an argument, or "win the point."

In dialogue, by contrast, the motto is **"seek first to understand."**

How do we use it?

- Listen
- Think about your own assumptions and mental models
- Compare what you are hearing to your own mental models
- Ask questions to gain more information
- Make your thinking clear to others by explaining your assumptions
- Don't promote an agenda

Examples

- Notice when you feel yourself reacting against something that makes you uncomfortable or angry. When that happens, take a breath, listen more carefully, and frame a question.
- You might ask:

  "tell me more about what you see as the benefits of that solution" or "can you explain what you mean by..."

  "It's interesting to hear that perspective. It makes me realize I've been assuming that..."

  "From where I sit, the most urgent issue has seemed to be x, what seems most urgent from your perspective?"

Nominal Group Process

When is this tool helpful?	How do we use it?	Examples
When there are lots of ideas and its hard to get them all out. When there is much discussion but just between a part of the group. The more silent members may have important ideas to share, but are uncomfortable speaking out. When you want everyone to be able to speak their ideas without being influenced immediately by others. When you are having difficulty prioritizing ideas.	1. State the question or issue about which you want to hear and be sure everyone has the same understanding of it. 2. Give people some time to write down their own thoughts about it. 3. Go around the group, one person at a time, ask for one new idea that has not been raised yet. Write them on the flipchart. 4. Keep going around the group until all ideas have been heard. (Don't discuss them until they are all up.) 5. Depending on your purpose you might: • Group your ideas and summarize them • Identify where you agree or disagree and focus discussion on areas of disagreement • Prioritize your ideas	**Brainstorming ideas:** Ask each person "What do you see as a challenge or barrier we're likely to face in this process?" **Identifying the research needed:** Ask each person "what would you like to know about the issue that you don't know now?" **Prioritizing actions:** Ask people "what do you think the most important action is and why?" 

Designing Strong Problem Statements

"…it is far better to generate an approximate solution to the right problem than an exact solution to the wrong problem!" - Ian Mitroff

When is this tool helpful?

When you are at the "fuzzy front end" of defining your object of work.

When you aren't sure you have shared clarity about the specific problem you are trying to solve.

Our brains work most effectively and most creatively when focused on clear, simple, open questions.

How do we use it?

- 'Good' problem statements are relatively broad and have a beginning stem (e.g. "How might we…?), a verb (e.g. "improve"), and an object or goal (e.g. "home safety").
- Good problem statements should NOT contain: (a) multiple objectives or (b) specific criteria.
- When you want to deal with multiple objectives, state each one as a separate problem.
- Even if you have criteria in mind, don't embed them in the problem statement. Creative ideas are less likely to flow when you also have to concentrate on constraints. Let all the ideas out first and then evaluate them against the criteria.

Examples

Strong: "What might we do to increase revenues?"

Strong: "How might we help our stakeholders better understand what we do?"

Strong: "How might we improve our employee recruitment process?"

Too many objectives: "How are we going to build trust, expand capacity, and enhance community outreach by the end of the year?"

Too many criteria: "How might we improve home safety with products having a 22% ROI, a payback in 2.5 years, and first year sales of $25 million."

Adapted from *"Structuring the Fuzz: The Design of Ideation for New Product Ideas"* by Arther B. VanGundy, Ph.D.

SLR Toolkit

Surfacing and Testing Assumptions

When is this tool helpful?

Identifying and testing assumptions is most useful very early in the process of defining an approach to work.

The process can bring to light the perspectives and beliefs that create the parameters for decision-making.

Testing your "certainties" can also highlight those assumptions that need to be checked out before further action is taken.

How do we use it?

Step 1. **Make assumptions visible**: List responses to a prompt such as "what are our certainties about factors that will impact our decisions or actions?"

Step 2. **Identify Counter-assumptions**: For each certainty, formulate a counter-assumption that captures an opposite certainty.

Step 3. **Test the impact** if the counter-assumption were true: If the counter-assumption were true, would it impact your behavior?

Step 4. **Delete ineffective pairs**: If the assumption/counter-assumption pair make little difference to your behavior, delete the assumption from your list

Step 5. **Assess importance and conviction**: For your remaining assumptions, rank each high or low depending on how critical it's truth is to justifying your approach. Next, rank each one high or low for strength of conviction.

Examples

Assumptions: *"We are certain that whatever actions we recommend will not be implementable unless X has input..*

Counter-assumptions: *"We can find a way to implement our recommendations even if X does not help shape them.."*

Impact test: *"If it were true that we could implement our recommendations without input from X, would we approach the problem differently?"*

Delete ineffective pairs: *"Since we would act the same way whether or not our assumption is true or false, we don't need to consider it's impact."*

Assess high/low importance: *"If our assumption about the need for X's input is true, it will have a high impact on how we work."*

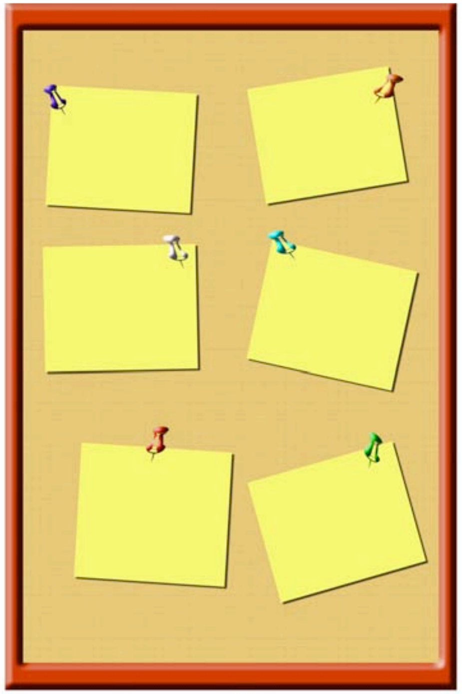
Assess strength of conviction: *"We have only low conviction that our assumption is true, so we will begin by checking out whether it is a good working assumption."*

The Five Why's

When is this tool helpful?	How do we use it?	Examples
The 5 Why's can help separate symptoms from causes when you're trying to understand the full nature of a single-problem event.	1. Identify the problem you want to talk about. Write it down on a card or flip chart. 2. Then ask "why does this happen?" Capture your answers in a column at the left of a flip chart page or white board. 3. For each answer you come up with, ask "Why is that?" Write down the answers to right of the previous answers. 4. If you want you can draw lines or arrows to link answers that relate to each other. 5. Keep asking why? three more times. Assess whether you have gotten a clearer sense of the underlying causes of the issue.	**"People have been ignoring the formal procedure for x"** ***Why is that happening****?* *Because they don't like the procedure.* **Why** *is that?* *Because it is difficult to remember.* **Why** *is that?* Because the forms are complex and there are fifteen steps required. **Why** *is that?* *There are three different offices which need different pieces of information.* **Why** *is that?* Each office is accountable for a different part of the process. *This conversation shifts the focus of the discussion from "how can we get people to abide by the procedure?" to "how might we simplify the lines of accountability?" - possibly a much deeper level issue.*

Using Cards (instead of flipcharts)

When is this tool helpful?	How do we use it?
When you want to: - see relationships between ideas - group similar ideas together - put action or process steps in a time sequence Anytime you want to break out of the linear thinking that can follow from listing ideas on a flip chart.	Write a single idea or statement on a card. Use a dark marker (not regular pen) so it is easy to read from a distance. Post cards on a wall. You can: • group them by theme • place them along a spectrum (low to high priority, for example) • order them in sequence ...whatever is most useful to your purpose.  ***technical notes:*** *Large self-stick notes can be purchased in 4X6 and 5X8 sizes.* *If your room is large or you are working with a large team, 8.5X11 cardstock posted with tacks, tape, or magnets (on a whiteboard) will be most visible from a distance.*

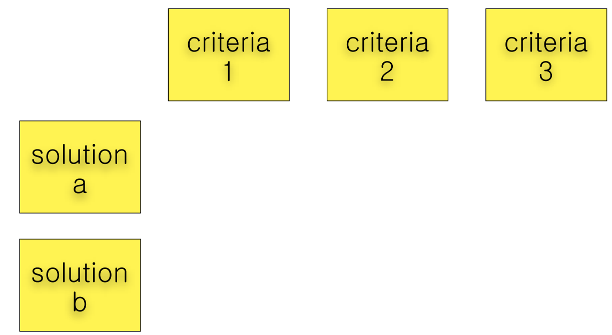
Applying Criteria to Solutions

When is this tool helpful?

When you have generated an array of possible solutions and want to assess how well each option meets your criteria for success.

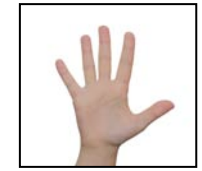
How do we use it?

1. Form a grid of cards on the wall with the possible solutions in the left hand column (one solution per card) and your criteria in a row across the top (one criteria per card.)



2. Ask individuals to assign a 1-7 rating for how each solution meets each criteria, and to write their number on a post-it note and stick it on the wall. (1= in no way meets the criteria; 7= meets the criteria extremely well)
3. Look at the range of rankings for each solution/criteria pair (a1; a2; etc.) If there are a wide array of rankings for a particular pair, ask for discussion of the rationale for the rating.
4. Once the ratings of each pair are within a fairly tight range, compute a "total score" for each solution.
5. At this point, you might ask for a "gut check" - is the higher ranking solution really the best one?
6. If you are ready, test for consensus on a decision to choose the higher ranking solution.

Fist-to-Five Consensus Checking



When is this tool helpful?

When you want to check group members' level of agreement with a proposal, decision, or recommended course of action.

When you want to ensure that each individual has an opportunity to express any hidden reservations or concerns.

When you want to gauge the size of the gap between different positions.

How do we use it?

1. Clearly state the proposition you want to test consensus about.
2. Ask each team member to hold up a number of fingers that indicates her or his current level of agreement with the proposal.

   Five fingers = enthusiastic support
   Four fingers = strong support
   Three fingers = just okay
   Two fingers = have reservations, need more discussion
   One finger = have serious concerns, do not agree
   Fist = totally against, will work against

3. The team has good consensus if all hands are showing 3 or more fingers. If any individual(s) show less than 3 fingers or a fist, then a consensus has not been reached. (A majority is not a consensus.)
4. If consensus has not been reached, ask one or more individuals who raised a fist or a low number to share their reservations. Also ask one or more individuals who indicated strong support to share their reasons. After the discussion, ask for a new show of hands.
5. Continue the process until the team indicates consensus.
6. If after a reasonable number of rounds, the team cannot reach agreement, here are some alternatives:
   - Park the topic for future attention
   - If more data would help address the concerns of those not in agreement, make a plan to gather and discuss the additional information.
   - The group leader may need to make a decision despite the absence of consensus.

SLR Toolkit

Process Mapping

When is this tool helpful?

When you want to define and analyze processes.

When you want to build a step-by-step picture of the process for analysis, discussion, or improvement.

How do we use it?

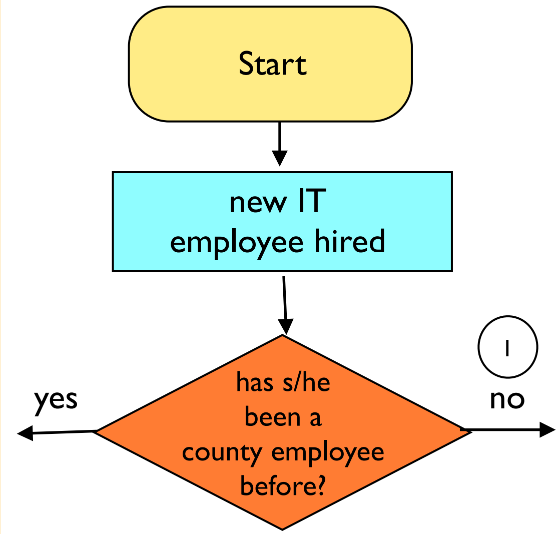
The Symbols

Most simple flow charts are made up of three main types of symbols:

- ***Elongated circles***, which signify the start or end of a process;
- ***Rectangles***, which show instructions or actions; and
- ***Diamonds***, which show decisions that must be made.

Symbols are connected one to the other by ***arrows***, showing the flow of the process.

For complex processes, ***numbered circles*** can serve as connectors to indicate where the flow moves onto another page. Use the same number on both pages so you can track the flow across multiple pages.



The Steps

1. Brainstorm process tasks, then list them in the order they occur. (Tip: putting each step on a self-stick note or card can enable you to easily explore different sequences and relationships.)

2. Ask questions such as "What really happens next in the process?" and "Does a decision need to be made before the next step?" or "What approvals are required before moving on to the next task?"

3. When you have a draft process map, take time to challenge your flow chart. Work from step to step asking if you have correctly represented the sequence of actions and decisions involved. And then (if you're looking to improve the process) look at the steps identified and think about whether work is duplicated, whether other steps should be involved, and whether the right people are doing the right jobs.

Adapted from www.mindtools.com: Flow charts

Results-based Meeting Planning

When is this helpful?

When you want to ensure that a meeting accomplishes results.

How do we use it?

1. Think ahead to the end of the meeting. What do you want to have accomplished? You may have both tangible and intangible desired outcomes.

Tangible Outcomes: *We have…*

decided
learned
brainstormed
discussed
prioritized
reviewed
created
resolved
reached agreement

Intangible Outcomes: *Each person…*

- has an opportunity to be heard
- feels respected and valued
- has an opportunity to contribute
- feels safe enough to raise concerns
- believes decisions are fair
- leaves thinking the meeting was a good use of their time

2. Assess potential barriers to accomplishing your desired outcomes - what could get in the way?:

- *What is the likelihood that the group will be in conflict? Do I need to leave time to come to resolution?*
- *Is the result I want achievable in one meeting? If it is too big for one session, how can I divide the work in a logical way?*
- *How can I help everyone feel engaged? What am I asking people to actively DO?*
- *What if only half the team members show up? Do I have a contingency plan?*
- *Is there a group member who tends to dominate? How am I going to structure it so everyone has a say?*

3. Create a Process Agenda, being conscious about how each activity in the agenda will help lead the group toward the desired results.

Interest-Based Problem Solving

When is this tool helpful?

When group members are in conflict.

When you want to find a way forward that involves mutual gain and sustainable solutions.

How do we use it?

1. **Focus on issues**, not personalities or the past.
   - May need to start with "clearing" – Is there anything that needs to be said or addressed before we focus on the issue?
   - Ask: What are we here to decide together? What's the most important topic on the table?
2. **Focus on interests**, not positions.
   - A <u>position</u> is one party's solution to an issue.
   - An <u>interest</u> is a party's concern, need, desire or goal, which expresses why an issue is important to the person.
   - Open sharing of interests by both parties improves communication, stimulates new thinking.
3. **Collaborate** to satisfy both party's interests.
   - Don't needlessly sacrifice your own interests.
   - Work as hard to satisfy the other party's interest's as you do your own.
   - Behind opposed positions lie shared and compatible interests as well as conflicting ones – be willing to be creative and flexible.
4. **Use objective criteria** to make joint agreements
   - Standards of fairness govern joint decisions.
   - Don't yield to pressure, nor coerce.
   - Parties develop contingency plans as a back-up in case of non-agreement.

Examples

If the **issue** is:

Where should we hold the next meeting?

Competing **positions** might be:

I think we should hold it at the downtown office

I think we should hold it at the uptown office

Exploring the underlying interests might sound like, "*Martha, can you tell us why it is important to you to use the uptown location? and then George, we'll ask the same of you.*"

George might say "... the last five meetings have been held downtown and that's not fair to the uptown staff. It sends a message that we are second class citizens and the downtown staff are at the center of things."

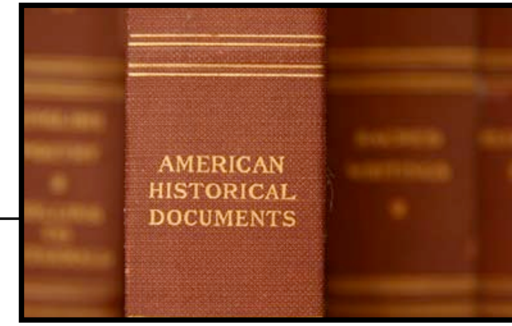
George's underlying interests are: fairness, equity, respect, and recognition

Martha's might be: convenience, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness

Making a joint agreement: With the real interests on the table, Martha, George and others can begin to create objective criteria for decision-making. Is expressing respect and recognition a shared value? Is using time and money wisely a shared value? How might both needs get met?

Based on Harvard Negotiation Project approach *Getting to Yes*, by Fisher and Ury
as adapted by Donna Vaudrin, EdD, Vaudrin Associates, 2003

Keeping a Learning History



When is this tool helpful?

When you want to keep a record of what your team has done and what you have learned.

When you want teams that follow to benefit from your hard work.

How do we use it?

A simple learning history has three parts:

1. **Documentation** including:
   - meeting agendas and notes
   - work products
   - key reference materials

2. **Process notes** relating what worked and didn't work in terms of how the team functioned together. Each team-member can contribute to these notes by responding to a "Learning History Questionnaire" (see the Learning History Questionnaire Template)

3. **Ideas for future work**. As your team worked and talked, what ideas bubbled up for other problems that need attention or areas that need improvement? The group can keep a running "parking lot" list and this information can also be gathered through the "Learning History Questionnaire."